

Isabel Garcia's Statement in Response to Arpaio Protest

July 2008

Good afternoon, and thank you for allowing me to respond in writing, as I am presently out of town.

As you know, Derechos Humanos, along with 6-7 community groups, called for a protest of Joe Arpaio's appearance at his book signing at the Barnes and Noble. Because of Maricopa Sheriff's Arpaio's outrageous police actions in the communities of Phoenix, as well as his political views surrounding the immigration issues in general, many of us in Tucson have made a promise that we will not allow him to come into our town without him hearing from those of us who stand in support of the thousands of workers and their families who have borne the brunt of his narrow-minded, ignorant policies. That he would come to Tucson to promote a book filled with lies, fear, and ignorant perspectives about immigrants, was especially appalling to us.

We stand for the principles of peace and justice. We live in a very precarious moment in history, where, again, human beings are being demonized and scapegoated, exploiting on the ugly and fearful in all of us. Derechos Humanos protested Arpaio, handing out flyers, briefly explaining why, and what he has done in Phoenix. You can have one of our leaflets if you would like, but among other things we denounce his antics that have created great racial divisions in Phoenix, at a more than \$41,000,000 cost to the taxpayers, and a few other actions he has engaged in. The leaflet states that we "continue to work for a community that is diverse, respectful, and appreciative of each other's differences." Others brought signs and megaphones, with someone bringing a large piñata with Arpaio's face glued on the head. I am sure you are aware that these types of symbolic images are not only common, but generally are used in context of referring to the policies of individuals in power.

I am now the target of a corporate-media-sponsored campaign to get me fired from my job as the Pima County Legal Defender. The first thing that you should know is that this is not a community-based campaign by those that disagree with me, but a campaign that was instigated by Jon Justice (not his true name) who has a program in the new hate-radio in town, 104.1 FM. On Friday morning, he was on his program urging everyone to call Chuck Huckelberry to fire me because I dared exercise my 1st Amendment right to express my views. They cover it by saying that the breaking of a piñata is a violent act! ??? That is simply absurd. The piñata was a symbol of Arpaio's racist, violent and brutal policies. The youth did not hit Arpaio, they hit the piñata to break the policies that keep us fearful of each other, and that have caused so much pain to so many hardworking men, women and their children. He is the violent one. I have spoken directly to some of his victims/survivors of his power, and have cried just listening to their accounts. US citizen and undocumented children alike have suffered the separation from their mothers, fathers, and siblings. People have lost their homes, families separated, their whole lives being violently disrupted by this horrible person, Arpaio. As a public official he should be aware of the facts: immigrants have contributed and continue to contribute to our society, they are human beings entitled to respect for their human rights, including the right to work and survive, and the right to be free from his unconstitutional interpretation of the laws.

I am proud to have been part of the community's response to his arrival in Tucson. We stand committed to stop hatred and xenophobia, and to work for a society that respects human rights for everyone regardless of their age, color, race, ethnic background, gender, gender-preference, religion. As an attorney I find it is not only my right, but my responsibility to stand up when the power of the state is used to crush people. I will continue to do so.